

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT**

July 30, 2003

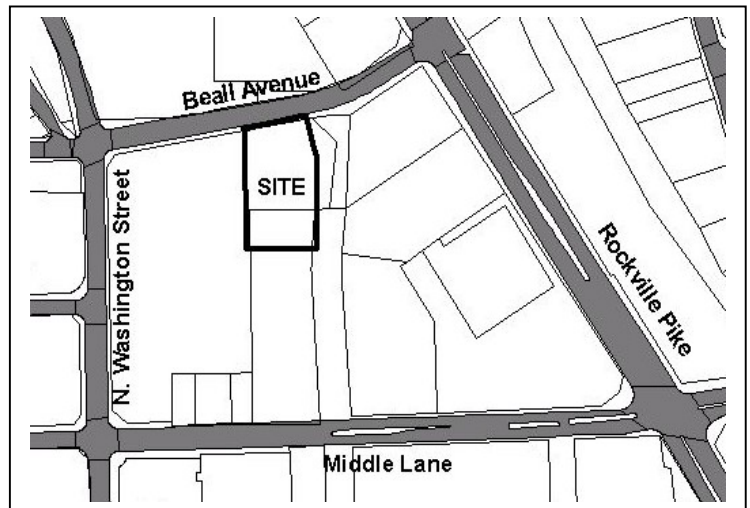
SUBJECT: Use Permit Application
USE2003-00662 –
Recommendation to the
Mayor and Council

Applicant: Montgomery County,
Maryland/Grimm and Parker,
Architects

Owner: City of Rockville

Date Filed: May 30, 2003

Location: Maryland Avenue Extended
and Beall Avenue



REQUEST:

- The applicant requests approval to construct a new regional public library, which will include office space for the library and other County agencies.

PREVIOUS RELATED ACTIONS:

PDP2003-00005 – Application for a Preliminary Development Plan for the Rockville Town Square, filed jointly by Federal Realty Investment Trust and the City of Rockville on May 15, 2003. Area of the PDP includes the proposed library site. Application pending action by the Planning Commission.

RELEVANT ISSUES

In reviewing the application, the following issues emerged and have been addressed:

- The proposed dumpster enclosure along Beall Avenue projects almost into the sidewalk area, instead of being internal.
- Compatibility with the Town Center design guidelines.
- Provide pedestrian-friendly areas at the front of the building.
- Potential additional requirements if the library proceeds without the Town Square project.

ANALYSIS

Background

The subject property is within the TCM-2 Zone. It has frontage on Beall Avenue. It will also have frontage on Maryland Avenue, which is planned to be extended from Middle Lane to Beall

Avenue. The site is owned by the City but will become County property as part of the overall Town Square project.

Property Description and Proposal

The property is a portion of a site owned by the City that is bounded by Middle Lane on the south, commercial properties fronting on Rockville Pike on the east, a strip shopping center on the west, and Beall Avenue on the north. The site is currently used as a City parking lot.

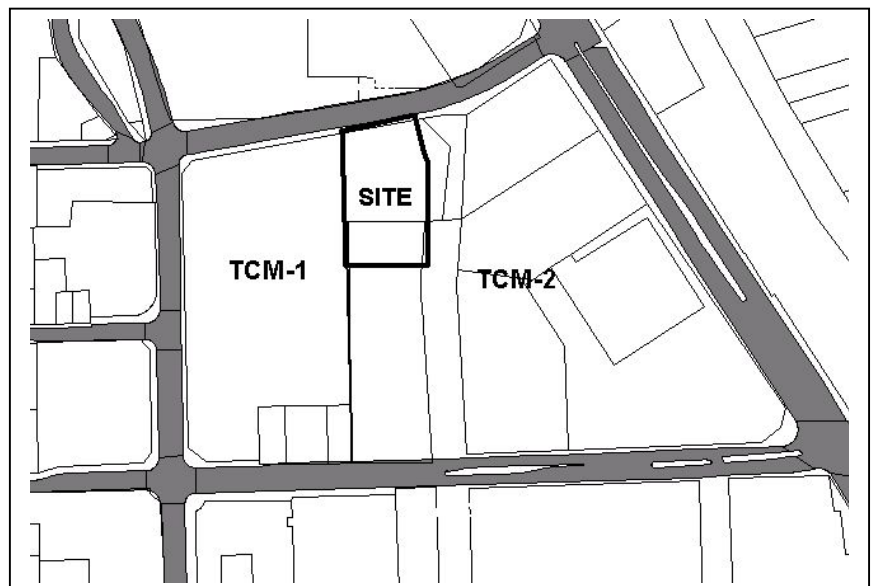
The proposed building is contained within a Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) application for the Rockville Town Square (PDP2003-00005), a joint development project with the City, Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT), and the County. The PDP encompasses the entire area bounded by Rockville Pike/Hungerford Drive, Beall Avenue, North Washington Street, and Middle Lane. As such, many of the associated facilities and amenities normally associated with a Use Permit will be provided off-site and/or by others.

The library itself is proposed to be a 3-story building containing a total of 102,522 square feet of gross floor area. The first floor will include library functions, plus a 3,500 square foot space for retail uses. The second floor will be devoted to library uses. The third floor will contain 12,754 square feet of office space for library administration, 6,695 square feet for the Literacy Council, and 14,725 square feet for other County agencies.

The front of the library will face on the public plaza proposed as part of the PDP application. There will also be public access from the Beall Avenue side. A loading area is also proposed on the Beall Avenue side.

Zoning

The property is located in the TCM-2 Zone. The zone requires a minimum lot area of 20,000 square feet. The proposed building will be part of a lot, as proposed in the PDP, of approximately 63,450 square feet. The zone allows a density of up to FAR 4. Based solely on the footprint of the library, the building has an FAR of 3. Based on the overall lot size noted, the effective FAR is 1.62. However, density within a PDP application is measured on the overall development. The PDP application provides FAR 0.57 for the overall project.



No setback from the public right-of-way is required. However, setbacks of approximately 15 feet from Maryland Avenue and 25 feet from Beall Avenue are shown on the submitted plans. No setbacks are required when adjoining non-residential uses. The west side of the building is proposed to adjoin a building that will contain retail uses on the ground level, and a cultural arts facility for the City on the upper floors. Therefore, no setback is required. Building height under the standard method is allowed up to 100 feet, as measured from the 448 foot elevation level. The front entrance will be at about the 440 foot elevation. The height of the building from the grade level at the front entrance is 56 feet, 4 inches. Based on the 448 foot level, the effective height of the building is 48 feet, 4 inches. In either case, the building height is well below the maximum allowed by the zone.

Loading Dock

As submitted, the plans propose an enclosed loading area at the northwest corner of the building fronting on Beall Avenue. This loading area is intended to facilitate the transfer of books to and from other libraries in the County, as well as other library equipment. The library is concerned about security and the potential for vermin in the building. As a consequence, the trash dumpsters were proposed to be located in an enclosure outside the building and extending into the sidewalk area.

Since the project is also a part of the PDP, which is proceeding under the optional method, special regulations apply to parking and loading areas. Section 25-683(6)(a) reads as follows:

Except for temporary parking lots approved under paragraph (7) of this section, all off-street parking spaces and loading facilities shall be located underground or in a building.

The PDP proposes to have an enclosed loading dock for the adjoining building immediately next to the library's loading area. A July 30, 2003 supplemental submittal proposes to eliminate the permanent exterior trash enclosure and instead share the loading dock with the adjoining building for trash service (see Attachment 2). Since this building may not be completed by the time the library opens, a temporary enclosure against the library building and next to the loading door may be allowed as a temporary measure until the permanent loading dock is available. The staff would like to have all of the library loading needs served by the common loading dock, to eliminate the need for two loading areas and driveways next to each other. Further work with the applicant and the library is needed to determine the feasibility of this arrangement.

Design

The Adopted Town Center Master Plan recommended a series of design guidelines for the Town Center area. These guidelines are intended to be used within the Urban Design Overlay District, which encompasses the library site. The guidelines are "...intended to provide guidance for developers and designers as they begin to plan and design the Rockville Town Center. The guidelines are not intended to be requirements, but principles that should be studied and followed. Exceptions to the guidelines will be considered if the design as proposed meets or exceeds the intent of the guidelines, and the purpose of the Town Center Master Plan. The guidelines shall apply to both public and private development within the Urban Design Overlay District."

In the case of the library, this project is intended to be the “flagship” for the County library system. As such, the County wants the building to be signature structure. The Design Guidelines recommend additional provisions specific to the library, as follows:

- Define the main entrance and character of the Library on the Town Plaza edge, but maintain a dominant presence and continuity of character on Maryland Avenue.
- Achieve a sense of “civic architecture” in the development of the architectural vocabulary; i.e. classic and durable.
- Create a sense of connection to the street on Maryland Avenue through the use of substantial gazing at street level and above.
- Emphasize the corners of the building on the Town Plaza edge, and on the corner of Maryland and Beall Avenues.
- Incorporate a retail component at street level to activate the base.
- Observe guidelines for Primary Elevation Section 5.2 which set a 20’ high cornice line around the Town Plaza that is horizontally expressed as successive columns.

In general, the proposed library design is consistent with most of the guideline recommendations. The main entry is located on the Town Plaza, where it creates a strong presence. The serpentine wall design along Maryland Avenue, with its substantial glazing, is also a defining architectural statement. The corners of the building at the plaza and at the corner of Maryland and Beall avenues are highlighted with circular towers that help define the building. In addition, the sidewalk along Maryland Avenue next to the building may have a curving design intended to complement the wall design. One interior feature will be the installation of the historic Vinson Drug Store soda fountain

The project includes a proposal for a 3,500 square foot retail space at the corner of the plaza and Maryland Avenue. This space will be finished and managed by FRIT, most likely for restaurant use. The plaza façade will have a brick cornice at the 20 foot level, with brick pilasters on 16 foot centers. Staff does recommend that the awnings proposed be functional rain shelters, rather than the louvered style proposed. Staff also recommends that the building subscribe to as many “green building” design standards as possible.

In response to staff comments, the applicant has submitted supplemental modifications to the proposed design. The modifications are to make the entry on Beall Avenue available to the public, rather than be a staff-only door. Functional window canopies are also proposed along the front of the building facing the public plaza, improving the pedestrian environment. Finally, the original plans had only one book drop proposed next to the main entrance. The supplemental plans now propose an additional book drop on Maryland Avenue, which will be more convenient.

The design of the library may not strike all observers as being “classic and durable civic architecture”. On the other hand, part of the intent of the overall design of the Town Center is to have it appear as if it grew incrementally over a period of time as a result of a number of builders/designers. The library is making a statement as a new, contemporary building while adhering to many of the design guidelines. Staff has suggested to the architects that some design alterations be considered, including using a brick with a red color that is closer to the Red Brick

Courthouse, and extending the brick pilasters to the cornice to help articulate the large glass areas.

Other Issues

Because the library is a part of the pending PDP application, many of the streetscape and engineering items normally attached to a Use Permit will be addressed within the overall review of the PDP. These include the streetscape design, water and sewer connections, traffic impact, stormwater management and parking. Certain of the recommended conditions of approval would be required only if the Town Square PDP project does not go forward, and the library essentially has to “stand alone”. The City will be providing the sidewalks, streetscaping, and other public amenities that would otherwise be required to be provided as part of this application.

A public meeting is being held by the County on the evening of Thursday July 31, 2003 to solicit additional input into the library design. As a result, more information on the design is expected to be presented at the Planning Commission meeting.

Section 25-192(b) of the Zoning Ordinance applies to this application, as follows:

Use permit applications for uses on land owned by the City or purchased by the applicant from the City in the Town Center Performance District shall be submitted to the Mayor and Council.

The subject property is being purchased from the City for library use. As such, the Mayor and Council have final Use Permit approval authority in this case. The Planning Commission is providing recommendations to the Mayor and Council to assist in their consideration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approval is recommended, subject to the following conditions:

1. Submission, for approval by the Chief of Planning, of eleven (11) copies of the site plan, revised according to Mayor and Council Exhibit “A”.
2. The applicant is bound by all statements submitted on the site plan and use permit application.
3. Show the streetscape design along Maryland Avenue and Beall Avenue.
4. All trash receptacles to be located inside the building. The trash loading area will be combined with the adjoining loading dock on the west side of the building. A temporary trash enclosure may be allowed next to the building until the joint loading dock is available.
5. If the Town Square project does not go forward, the library must provide stormwater management (SWM) for the site. They must show the drainage required, and

connections to existing or proposed SWM facilities. Adequate treatment and conveyance to a receiving system is required.

6. Parking, pedestrian access, water and sewer service must be available to the building prior to occupancy.
7. Identify parking and pedestrian access during all phases of the Town Center construction.
8. If the Town Center project does not go forward, provide a program to treat the blank west wall of the building.
9. If the Town Center project does not go forward, the project must comply with the Forest Conservation Plan requirements.
10. In accordance with the revised plans submitted July 30, 2003, provide functional awnings at the first floor level along the public plaza frontage and a second book drop on Maryland Avenue.
11. All construction must meet the requirements of all applicable City construction codes, including but not limited to the fire, building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical codes, and the Maryland Building Code for the Handicapped

DEM/

Attachments:

- A. Site Plan as submitted
- B. Loading dock detail as revised 7/30/03
- C. Aerial Photo
- D. Proposed PDP development program
- E. Applicant's Design Narrative statement
- F. Applicant's supplemental submittal of 7/30/03
- G. Building Elevations
- H. Building Renderings
- I. Use Permit Application